

Presidents and Prime Ministers: United Kingdom – United States: ‘Special Relationship’

during the 1960’s

by

Melissa S. Thompson

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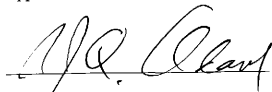
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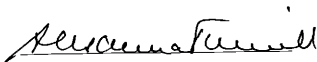
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Approved as to style and content by:



R. J. Q. Adams (Faculty Advisor)

Department of History



Susanna Finnell, Executive Director

Honors Programs and Academic Scholarships

Fellows Group: Humanities

Abstract

Presidents and Prime Ministers: United Kingdom – United States: ‘Special Relationship’ during the 1960’s

Melissa S. Thompson, (Dr. R. J. Q. Adams) University Undergraduate Fellow, 1998-1999, Texas A&M University, Department of History

The primary focus of the paper is upon the political nature of the relationship, specifically the role of the political actors and highest political offices. The designated time period of the paper necessitates beginning in the midst of political terms of office rather than at the commencement of terms. However, this affords a unique examination of the relationship over a definable time period rather than an overview of particular political careers.

The secondary focus of the paper is to determine a specific definition of the special relationship. Although the definition of the term special relationship is crucial to comprehension of the importance of the political relationship, a large majority of British and American scholars have neglected to define the term. The questions that have shaped the paper are as follows.

What is the relationship that has been maintained between the United States and the United Kingdom? Who has maintained the relationship? Why is the “Special Relationship” so special? Where is this relationship taking the United States and the United Kingdom? Answers to these questions are highly relevant and necessary to understanding our significance as Americans, Britons and citizens of a global community.

The special relationship between Britain and the United States has its origins in the establishment of the United States as a republic. The name 'special relationship' for the relations between the United States and the United Kingdom was first employed in nineteen forty-six by Sir Winston Churchill. That relationship has been the subject of many debates, books, articles, political activities and private discussions. However, the relationship between our two countries is a unique one that continues to puzzle and mystify those of us who try to define it. In legal and historical records, the relationship is a warm one but in the unwritten codes of this relationship, it is more than warm, it is truly special. It is difficult to categorize or delineate all the nuances and meanings of the relationship because it is one that is experienced on the level of the most brazen traveler to the most diplomatic intelligence officer, the most experienced business man to the most timid exchange student, and on the level of common men and highest political actors. The relationship has occasionally been used to manipulate and contrive policy to serve one side over another but the relationship has also been used to forge a legendary friendship.

This paper will determine whether the relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom during the nineteen sixties was an independent or an interdependent one. The series of questions developed and used are as follows. What is the relationship that has been maintained between the United States and the United Kingdom? Who has maintained the relationship? Why is what Winston Churchill termed the "Special Relationship" so special?¹ Where is this relationship taking the United States and the United Kingdom? Answers to these and other questions are highly relevant and necessary to understanding our significance as Americans, Britons, and citizens of a global community. Understanding this historical

¹ Hitchens, Christopher. *Blood, Class and Nostalgia, Anglo-American Ironies*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1990, pp. 21.

relationship is also a prerequisite for comprehending the present relationship and for prognosticating the future role of this relationship in determining independent state policy and action.

The primary focus of this paper is upon the political nature of the relationship, specifically the role of the politicians and highest political offices. The designated time period of this paper necessitates beginning in the midst of political terms of office rather than at the commencement of terms. However, this affords a unique examination of the relationship over a definable time period rather than a synopsis of particular political careers. The secondary focus of the paper is to determine a specific definition or a pinpointing of the essence of the special relationship. The definition of the special relationship is relegated to a secondary focus only due to the amount of coverage in this paper, not to importance. Although the definition of the term special relationship is crucial to comprehension of the importance of the political relationship, a large majority of British and American scholars have neglected to define the term. This leaves audiences confused and unable to accurately compare one set of findings to another.

What is the 'special relationship'? A large number of books have been written in an effort to explain how the relationship was formed, about its health, how it fared during times of crises, and how it helps 'us' versus 'them', or 'them' versus 'us'. Nevertheless, it is difficult to compare all these works without a clear definition of the term. To one, it may mean political leaders on speaking terms and good educational exchanges but to another, it may mean close military cooperation and coordination of foreign diplomacy. The 1996 British *Collins English Dictionary* defines 'special' as an adjective meaning, "1 distinguished from or better than others of its kind...2 designed or reserved for a specific purpose...3 not usual, different from

normal...4 particular or primary....² The 1968 American *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* defines 'special' as an adjective meaning, "1. of a distinct or particular kind or character....2. having a particular function, purpose, application, etc....3. dealing with particulars; specific....4. distinguished or different from what is ordinary or usual....5. extraordinary; exceptional...."³

These definitions point to an understanding of 'special' that includes more than perhaps most scholars have considered. In order discern the meaning and significance of the term 'special relationship' scholars must appreciate that the term 'special relationship' includes all aspects of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States. The meaning of the special relationship cannot be limited to one or two major areas such as politics and business but must include the understanding that the relationship is infused with cultural relationships and meanings as well as business, economic, and political nuances at all levels. This broad inclusion lends itself to Christopher Hitchens' statement that, "The 'special relationship' is something that is *supposed* to elude definition; *supposed* to be protean and vague. [Emphasis in original]"⁴ However he further states that, "Its real roots and character are to be sought in the grand triad of race, class, and empire – the trivium upon which the relationship rests."⁵ Alex Danchev provides a list of ten *distinguishing* features, ranked in order of importance, of the special relationship: transparency, informality, generality, reciprocity, exclusivity, clandestinity, reliability, durability, potentiality, and mythicizability.⁶ Both of these authors intuitively recognize the significance of the relationship but are relegated to listing attributes to define it. These lists long or short, are merely lists and still do not provide a clear definition of the special relationship. A definition of

² *Collins Paperback English Dictionary*. Wrotham, England: HarperCollins, 1996, pp. 791.

³ *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, College Edition*. New York: Random House, 1968, pp. 1261.

⁴ Hitchens, *Blood, Class and Nostalgia, Anglo-American Ironies*. pp. 21.

the special relationship is to be found in the people of Britain and the United States. We are the ones who read, remember, experience, write, talk, and carry on the historical precedent between our two nations. We make the relationship special because we choose to relate to one another on terms that are friendlier and more considerate than our relations with other nations and peoples.

Who maintained this relationship? This paper is focused primarily upon the highest political actors in the relationship therefore the people discussed were Presidents or Prime Ministers during the nineteen sixties. There were four American Presidents during the decade of the sixties: Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon and three British Prime Ministers: Harold Macmillan, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, and Harold Wilson. See the Appendix for a cross listing of Presidents and Prime Ministers.

The beginning of the nineteen sixties saw President Eisenhower's term drawing to a close and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan firmly ensconced in office. Relations between the two heads of state and the two countries were very amiable. It is well known that the President and the Prime Minister were on a first name basis and exchanged many letters. Shortly after Macmillan's visit to Camp David and Eisenhower's agreement that the United States would provide the United Kingdom with Skybolt missiles, Macmillan sent Eisenhower a telegram on March 31, 1960. In the telegram he stated, "I find it hard to express in the form of a letter how much I valued our talks over the last few days and how grateful I am to you for all your kindness and hospitality."⁷ Macmillan further stated, "I believe that this last meeting has been one of the most fruitful which we have had together and I am so much comforted to feel that our thoughts

⁵ Hitchens. *Blood, Class and Nostalgia, Anglo-American Ironies*. pp. 21

⁶ Danchev, Alex. *On Specialness, Essays in Anglo-American Relations*. London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1998, pp. 6.

⁷ Public Record Office. (Subsequently PRO). PREM 11/2994. "Prime Minister's Personal Telegram." 31 March 1960.

are in line on so many subjects.”⁸ The hospitality and kindness extended to Macmillan was a genuine expression from Eisenhower. After Eisenhower’s retirement to private life, they continued to write and attempt to arrange visits with each other.

Perhaps the best indicators of the significance or importance these two men placed on their friendship are the last few letters they exchanged as Eisenhower was leaving office. In a letter dated January 13, 1961, Macmillan wrote Eisenhower,

Whether we agreed or disagreed on particular policies we had I think a deep unity of purpose and, I like to feel, a frank and honest appreciation of each other’s good faith. It has certainly been an enormous help to me to know that we had these relations of complete confidence. This was something which one does not, alas, often find between Heads of Government even allied countries; personal friendship and trust cannot be manufactured, they just grow.⁹

Eisenhower replied on January 19, 1961, “But on the brighter side, I take with me many happy memories which I know will brighten the future. One of the greatest of these is the satisfaction stemming from the close relationship which has existed between us...”¹⁰ He further stated, “I thank you for making this possible, and I feel more at ease knowing that you are still at the helm of our oldest and most trusted ally.”¹¹ These short excerpts show how much the men respected each other and how special the relationship was between them and between our two nations.

⁸ PRO. PREM 11/2994. “Prime Minister’s Personal Telegram.” 31 March 1960.

⁹ PRO. PREM 11/3606. “Letter from Macmillan to Eisenhower.” 13 January 61.

¹⁰ PRO. PREM 11/3606. “Letter from Eisenhower to Macmillan.” 19 January 61.

¹¹ PRO. PREM 11/3606. “Letter from Eisenhower to Macmillan.” 19 January 61.

These letters and the telegram also point to a large degree of interdependence, one nation helping the other, rather than independence from each other.

President Kennedy and Prime Minister Macmillan also had a close relationship. D. Cameron Watt describes it well.

The opening bars in the Macmillan-Kennedy concerto...
were cautious and tentative. Mutual trials, like
Krushchev's brutal mauling of an inexperienced Kennedy
in Vienna and the Berlin crisis of 1961, gradually brought
them together. Following the disastrous Vienna encounter,
Kennedy was suffering additionally with acute back pain.
Macmillan, aided by his highly developed political antennae,
immediately got it right by taking the President, informally,
up to his study for a drink. Kennedy came to rely on the
wisdom of his counsels...¹²

Macmillan did not simply fall into this position of elder statesman to the younger Kennedy; it was a calculated maneuver designed to continue the close relationship between the two countries. In a Prime Minister's Personal Minute addressed to the Foreign Secretary on November 9, 1960, Macmillan observes, "I must somehow convince him [Kennedy] that I am worth consulting not as an old friend (as Eisenhower felt) but as a man who, although of advancing years, has young and fresh thoughts [Parenthesis in original, brackets added]."¹³ The same day Macmillan sent a congratulatory telegram to President-elect Kennedy. In it he stated, "I look forward to working

¹² Watt, D. Cameron. "Demythologizing the Eisenhower Era." in *The 'Special Relationship', Anglo-American Relations Since 1945*. Eds. Roger Louis and Hedley Bull. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, pp. 91.

¹³ PRO. PREM 11/3599. "Prime Minister's Personal Minute." addressed to the Foreign Secretary. 9 November 1960.

with you in the causes which the people of this country and of the United States both hold so dear.”¹⁴ Macmillan was still searching for the best way to approach Kennedy but heeded his advisors not to rush the matter.

On December 19, 1960, Macmillan sent an eight page telegram to Kennedy and in closing he wrote, “I am sure that the fundamental interests of our two countries are identical and that, when our policies are harmonised, they stand a better chance of success. I can assure you that we in this country will not shrink from sacrifice, nor I believe have we lost our power to think and act imaginatively in the great crisis of our time.”¹⁵ Kennedy’s December 31, 1960, letter in response to the Prime Minister’s telegram was a significant one in that it demonstrated his recognition of the importance of the relationship and that the relationship was not one-sided on the part of the British. Kennedy stated,

I realize that given our close relations and the nature and circumstances of our two countries our policies are broadly in harmony. But I too believe that we must ‘rethink urgently and radically’ as you so well put it. Further, I would hope that our two Governments could work out with some precision the details of policy which are important to close cooperation. Britain has enormous capacity to play a major role in the shaping of events and to help recapture the initiative in the struggle for freedom.¹⁶

After Kennedy’s inauguration, Macmillan sent him another telegram and among other things, stated, “May I add what a great impression your inaugural speech has made in this

¹⁴ PRO. PREM 11/3599. “Prime Minister’s Personal Telegram.” sent to Senator John Kennedy. 9 November 1960.

¹⁵ PRO. PREM 11/3326. “Prime Minister’s Personal Telegram.” sent to Mr. Kennedy. 19 December 1960, pp. 7-8.

country. We were particularly struck by your phrase about considering what the United States and other countries can together do for the freedom of man.”¹⁷ Macmillan was continuing his friendly overtures to draw Kennedy into a personal friendship without being condescending. Kennedy may have been a young world leader, but he certainly was no fool. The decision to continue the special relationship at the presidential level was his. In a February 19, 1961, telegram to Kennedy, Macmillan wrote, “I write to thank you for your letter of February 6 about the continuance of Anglo-United States understandings concerning consultation before the use of nuclear weapons, and the use of bases in the United Kingdom.”¹⁸ Macmillan continued, “I also greatly value, especially in this context, your reference to the intimacy with which our countries work together.”¹⁹

President Kennedy was almost immediately confronted with the decision on whether to provide aid or not to the French in their nuclear program. This was a situation of great interest to Macmillan because the U. S. was helping Britain at the time. Kennedy was frustrated in talks with de Gaulle and turned to Macmillan for suggestions and ideas. In a telegram on May 8, 1961, Kennedy stated, “I may send you further thoughts on the other useful and interesting proposals in your letter. Again, let me tell you how grateful I am for your wise council.”²⁰ Kennedy chose not to aid the French, but again, that decision was his and Macmillan only served as a sounding board. D. Cameron Watt suggests that, “Much has been written about this ‘Special Relationship within the Special Relationship,’ the personal friendship, nay, affection for each

¹⁶ PRO. PREM 11/3599. “Letter from John F. Kennedy, Senator, to Mr. Macmillan.” 31 December 1960.

¹⁷ PRO. PREM 11/4052. “Prime Minister’s Personal Telegram.” sent to the President of the United States. 23 January 1961, pp. 1-2.

¹⁸ PRO. PREM 11/4052. “Prime Minister’s Personal Telegram.” sent to the President of the United States. 19 February 1961.

¹⁹ PRO. PREM 11/4052. “Prime Minister’s Personal Telegram.” sent to the President of the United States. 19 February 1961.

²⁰ PRO. PREM 11/3314. “Prime Minister’s Personal Telegram.” sent to the Prime Minister from John F. Kennedy. 8 May 1961.

other that grew between President and Prime Minister, and it and its impact on events should never be underestimated.”²¹

John Dickie also confirms the close relationship between Kennedy and Macmillan, “No differences of opinion or age prevented the two leaders from getting along famously. A fondness developed between them which went beyond the necessities of alliance.”²² The friendship between Macmillan and Kennedy has been compared to Wilson and Churchill during the war because of the cordiality and genuineness they shared; they enjoyed more than just a business or political friendliness. In September 1961, the retiring British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Harold Caccia, was quoted in *The Times*, London as saying that, “...Britain and the United States were so closely involved with each other that, ‘the discomfiture of one of us diminishes the other’.”²³ Kennedy and Macmillan met four times in 1961. Another important part of the closeness between the two men was David Ormsby-Gore, who replaced Sir Caccia as the British Ambassador to Washington. He was a long-standing friend of Kennedy and his family and according to Alan Dobson he, “...had privileged access...” to Kennedy.²⁴ Ormsby-Gore was included in some family holidays and could advise Kennedy of British positions or opinions with much greater ease than previous ambassadors.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home became the new Prime Minister in October 1963, and Lyndon Johnson became President following Kennedy’s assassination in November 1963. The new President and Prime Minister met briefly on November 26 and a record of the conversation indicates that, “...he [Johnson] repeatedly expressed his sincere wish to work closely with Britain over all world problems and his determination to maintain the foreign policies of

²¹ Watt, D. Cameron. “Demythologizing the Eisenhower Era”, in *The ‘Special Relationship’, Anglo-American Relations Since 1945*, pp. 91.

²² Dickie, John. *‘Special’ No More, Anglo-American Relationship: Rhetoric and Reality*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994, pp. 105.

President Kennedy which he fully endorsed.”²⁵ Johnson followed up this sentiment of cooperation in his letter of December 1, 1963. He wrote, “This brings my warmest thanks for your message of sympathy on the death of President Kennedy. He had the strongest sense of the indispensable connection that binds our two countries, and for this reason our government and people have felt comfort from your presence...in recent days.”²⁶ He further emphasized the importance of the special relationship by stating, “I know full well from years of experience that almost everywhere in the world our interests and concerns are intertwined.”²⁷

Johnson and Douglas-Home met in Washington in February 1964, and in his welcoming remarks printed in the *New York Times*, Johnson stated, “...There is between our two countries the invisible cords of a mingled respect and understanding and affection, much as two brothers who may differ but whose ties are too strong to ever break.”²⁸ Johnson again emphasized the significance of the relationship and he stated something crucial to understanding the relationship, the ‘ties are too strong to ever break’. Douglas-Home echoed the sentiment when he replied, “I would once more only say that anything that I can do in our talks and my Government can do to help to keep the relations between Britain and the United States close and harmonious will be done with the full support of all our countrymen.”²⁹ This was a very public affirmation of the importance of the relationship and demonstrated the esteem with which the two men held it. Douglas-Home again stressed the sense of the importance of the relationship in a telegram on February 14, 1964. He stated, “Our talks have not only carried on a sound tradition but achieved

²³ “Sir H. Caccia on Anglo-U.S. Bonds.” *The Times*, London 22 September 1961, pp. 10.

²⁴ Dobson, Alan P. *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 125.

²⁵ PRO. PREM 11/4790. “Record of a conversation between the Prime Minister and President Lyndon Johnson at the White House from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, November 26.” 26 November 1963.

²⁶ PRO. PREM 11/5189. “Letter to Mr. Prime Minister.” from Lyndon B. Johnson. 1 December 1963.

²⁷ PRO. PREM 11/5189. “Letter to Mr. Prime Minister.” from Lyndon B. Johnson. 1 December 1963.

²⁸ “President’s Welcome and the Prime Minister’s Reply.” *The New York Times* February 13, 1964, pp. 3.

²⁹ “President’s Welcome and the Prime Minister’s Reply.” *The New York Times* February 13, 1964, pp. 3.

a real meeting of minds.”³⁰ He continued, “On the personal level I like to think that from now on our agreements will be under-pinned by mutual trust and any disagreement softened by friendship and mutual understanding.”³¹

Harold Wilson succeeded Douglas-Home as Prime Minister in October of 1964, and Johnson immediately sent a congratulatory note. Johnson wrote, “I look forward to the continuation of the close and friendly cooperation, based on mutual confidence and respect, which has bound our countries so closely for so long.”³² Wilson responded the next day, “I was particularly glad to see what you said about relations between the United States and Britain and this gives me a chance, on my side, to assure you that my colleagues and I are convinced that close friendship and co-operation between us is just as essential now as it has been in the past.”³³ Wilson’s first trip abroad as Prime Minister was to the United States. A New York Times editorial stated, “From the beginning of his leadership Mr. Wilson has insisted that close British-American relations must be key to his policies...”³⁴ However, as early as March 1963, Wilson was quoted in The New York Times as stating that he, “...wants no ‘special relationship’ with the United States and believes that the ‘natural relationship’ of a community of interests will suffice to safeguard the links between the two countries.”³⁵ Baylis counters that this, “...change in the description of the relationship...was more verbal than substantive.”³⁶ Baylis maintains that the relationship was vital to Wilson and to his Government.³⁷

³⁰ PRO. PREM 11/5199. “Telegram to the President.” from the Prime Minister. 14 February 1964.

³¹ PRO. PREM 11/5199. “Telegram to the President” from the Prime Minister. 14 February 1964.

³² PRO. PREM, 13/103. “Letter to the Prime Minister.” from Lyndon B. Johnson. 16 October 1964.

³³ PRO. PREM, 13/103. “Prime Minister’s Personal Telegram.” to the President. 17 October 1964.

³⁴ Gruson, Sydney. “Wilson Charts New British Course.” *The New York Times* December 20, 1964, sec. 4: 4.

³⁵ Gruson, Sydney. “Harold Wilson: Lucky and Skillful,” *The New York Times* March 30, 1963, pp. 3.

³⁶ Baylis, John. *Anglo-American Defence Relations 1939-1984, The Special Relationship*. London: Macmillan, 1984, pp. 152.

³⁷ Baylis. *Anglo-American Defence Relations 1939-1984, The Special Relationship*. pp. 152.

The question of British membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) was increasingly a perplexing and difficult area for Wilson. The British were over-extended in world military commitments and experiencing economic troubles at home. The apparent difficulty to Britain joining the European Community lay in European, specifically French, concerns about the special relationship with the United States. "In vetoing the British application for membership [in the EEC] in 1963, and repeatedly since, General de Gaulle has indicated that the close relationship between the two 'Anglo-Saxon' countries is a major obstacle."³⁸ There was fear that Britain would serve as an American interest in the Community. A 1965 editorial in the *New York Times* stated, "Apart from the economic factor, it seems probable that even after de Gaulle, the price of Britain's admission to 'Europe' will be concentration of its effort on the Continent and the fading out of any 'special relationship' with the United States. The final choice will be for Britain to make; but whichever way it goes, it will fundamentally affect the United States and Anglo-American relations."³⁹

Regardless of European problems, relations between the United States and Britain were still close. The British Foreign Secretary, George Brown, appeared at a Senate luncheon as a guest of President Johnson in October 1966. Brown was introduced by the Senate Majority leader, "...as a representative of 'one of our closest, if not our closest, ally.'..."⁴⁰ Wilson publicly and privately continued to stress the importance of British membership in the EEC. To that the United States State Department replied, "...the United States long has favored a Europe that would be a pillar of equal economic strength in which Britain would play an important

³⁸ Lewis, Anthony. "Stronger Europe Urged by Wilson as Offset to U.S." *The New York Times* December 1, 1966, pp. 1.

³⁹ "Britain's Defense Role." Editorial. *The New York Times* October 22, 1965, pp. 42.

⁴⁰ Welles, Benjamin. "Brown Vows Help on Vietnam Peace." *The New York Times* October 15, 1966, pp. 4.

part.”⁴¹ A letter from American politicians and university presidents appeared in *The Times*, London, in 1967. The letter stated, “...that the ‘special relationship’ between the United States and Britain should remain a fundamental part of the two countries policy even if Britain enters the European Economic Community.”⁴²

Wilson and Johnson met in June of 1967, and after the meetings they spoke by telephone. Wilson stated, “Our sense of common purpose was indeed heartening.”⁴³ Johnson sent a telegram later that day and stated, “Your friendship, and that of the British people, is a great comfort in these troubled times.”⁴⁴ Relations between the two men, behind the scenes, were as cordial as ever. In 1968 Johnson and Wilson met in a much more public arena and Johnson welcomed Wilson with, “...assurances that ‘the American people are backing Britain’.”⁴⁵ A *New York Times* journalist further speculated that, “The interests of the two countries are bound to diverge now, more than they have. Their economic concerns are going to differ, and their political outlook. But there will remain a relationship special in indefinable but significant ways.”⁴⁶

Richard Nixon took office as President of the United States in January 1969, and he met with Wilson in London in February. Upon arrival, “Mr. Nixon seemed animated and put his arm around the Prime Minister’s shoulder several times during the airport ceremonies.”⁴⁷ Nixon and Wilson apparently liked each other immediately because the relations with Wilson and Nixon

⁴¹ “No Washington Comment.” *The New York Times* December 1, 1966, pp. 11.

⁴² “American’s Letter Stresses British Tie.” *The New York Times* February 21, 1967, pp. 5.

⁴³ PRO. PREM 13/1906. “Phone-Patched to Department of State from Prime Minister.” to the President. 3 June 1967.

⁴⁴ PRO. PREM 13/1906. “Telegram from the President.” to the Prime Minister. 3 June 1967.

⁴⁵ Frankel, Max. “President Assures Wilson Americans ‘Back Britain’.” *The New York Times* February 9, 1968, pp. 1.

⁴⁶ Frankel, Max. “President Assures Wilson Americans ‘Back Britain’.” *The New York Times* February 9, 1968, pp. 1.

⁴⁷ Semple, Robert, Jr. “Nixon Sees Wilson after Reassuring European Allies.” *The New York Times* February 25, 1969, pp. 1.

were to become much friendlier than even those with Johnson. "The official line from Whitehall was that the talks with Prime Minister Wilson and his colleagues were exceedingly friendly and that a good relationship had quickly been established."⁴⁸ Nixon was only in London for 39 hours, but he quickly established his openness to the special relationship and willingness to continue it. Wilson went so far as to say that, "a 'close relationship' had been established."⁴⁹

Why is the special relationship so special? An April 4, 1962, British internal document that originated from the Foreign Office and was marked confidential indicates that, "The sense of association between the British and Americans goes so deep, is felt at so many levels and yet is so intangible that neither are fully conscious of it."⁵⁰ The document further states that, "Constant exchanges of people, and their ideas, films, books, plays, etc., keep the sense of association alive and developing."⁵¹ This document was written for people within the British Government at the time, but it accurately demonstrated an understanding of the importance of the relationship and it is applicable even today. Jeremy Tunstall indicates the journalistic sentiment; "The 1960's were altogether a wonderful time to be a British foreign correspondent. ...whatever the political realities might be...journalists felt that there was a special relationship between American and British journalism."⁵² In his 1968 *Anglo-American Democracy*, Malcolm Shaw states that, "When American Government is taught in American universities, there are, as a rule, more comparative references to British practice than to that of any other country. Likewise, when British Government is taught in British universities, there are generally more comparative

⁴⁸ Lewis, Anthony. "Nixon Stresses Trade and European Security in His Talks with British." *The New York Times* February 26, 1969, pp. 14.

⁴⁹ Mackintosh, John P. "No 'special' relationship." *The Times*, London 7 April 1969, pp. 6.

⁵⁰ PRO. PREM 11/5192. "Foreign Office Publication." Distributed by A.C.I. Samuel of the Foreign Office. 4 April 1962, pp. 6.

⁵¹ PRO. PREM 11/5192. "Foreign Office Publication." Distributed by A.C.I. Samuel of the Foreign Office. 4 April 1962, pp. 6.

⁵² Tunstall, Jeremy. *Newspaper Power, The New National Press in Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, pp. 344.

references to America than to any other country.”⁵³ Shaw’s statement adds one more facet to the significance of the relationship between Britain and the United States. The relationship is special because it is experienced by many people in many different occupations.

An April 28, 1962, personal note by Prime Minister Macmillan about his conversation with President Kennedy earlier that day states that,

“...he [Kennedy] has learned a good deal since last year and events have so turned out as to make him, unless I am wholly mistaken, place more reliance on British good sense and advice than on anyone else. If this is so, a great deal of the credit is due to the Ambassador [Sir David Ormsby-Gore] whose relations with the White House are of course quite unique”⁵⁴

This is not to suggest that Kennedy was unable to trust anyone else, but rather that Kennedy trusted the British as a close ally and as reliable friends. After Kennedy and Macmillan met in December 1962, in Nassau to discuss the failure of the planned Skybolt nuclear weapons and Kennedy offered the British Polaris nuclear weapons, Macmillan experienced political difficulties in London. Macmillan made no excuses for his difficulties in his letter thanking Kennedy for their talks in Nassau, however he did state, “...I feel certain that the dust will soon begin to clear and that our agreement will become a historic example of the nice balance between interdependence and independence which is necessary if Sovereign states are to work in partnership together for the defence of freedom.”⁵⁵ In turn, Kennedy was so concerned about Macmillan’s position that he sent transcripts of his own press conference so that Macmillan

⁵³ Shaw, Malcolm. *Anglo-American Democracy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968, pp. 1.

⁵⁴ PRO. PREM 11/3783. “Note by the Prime Minister of his conversation with President Kennedy on the morning of Saturday 28 April 1962 at the White House.” pp. 4.

⁵⁵ PRO. PREM 11/4052. “Letter to John F. Kennedy.” 24 December 1962, pp. 1.

could freely quote his exact words. In his letter, Kennedy stated, "I noticed with sympathy that some of the first reactions in England did not reflect a full understanding of the real achievement of Nassau in blending independence and interdependence. But I am more and more convinced myself that together we have made a major step forward..."⁵⁶ Macmillan's free usage of the term interdependence and Kennedy's reply including it, marked a point where the two leaders fully recognized the special relationship and the fact that it was interdependent. Kennedy's use of the term also indicates a level of interdependence not fully recognized by previous U.S. Presidents. Sir David Ormsby-Gore was quoted in *The Times of London*, as saying of the Macmillan and Kennedy administrations, "I believe our two Governments are cooperating with each other more closely than any other two free and sovereign powers have ever done before in peace time."⁵⁷

Where is the special relationship taking the United States and Britain? The special relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States has consistently been maintained at political, business, educational and cultural levels, and there is presently no indication that any of these levels should be, or will be abandoned any time soon. Dobson wrote, "There is a popular Atlantic cultural community, facilitated by a common language, by easy access to films and books and by buoyant tourist, commercial and educational intercourse. Britain is still the single most popular destination for US tourists outside the Western Hemisphere."⁵⁸ Danchev's closing sentence sums up his opinion of the state of the special relationship, "*Requiescat in pace Anglo-America*."⁵⁹ Since he considers the special relationship dead, he obviously must think that it has no future. Baylis argues that, "In the past Britain has been largely responsible for keeping

⁵⁶ PRO. PREM 11/4229. "Teleprinter Letter to the Prime Minister." from John F. Kennedy. 7 January 1963.

⁵⁷ "Gold Medal for Gen. Eisenhower." *The Times*, London. New York Correspondent. 23 May 1963, pp. 17.

⁵⁸ Dobson. *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 169.

the relationship 'special'.⁶⁰ He continues, "...the future of the relationship also depends on whether the United States continues to be convinced of the value of the special relationship."⁶¹ The consensus in Louis and Bull's edited volume is that the future of the special relationship is unclear and a prediction of its future unwise.⁶² The special relationship has produced many good friendships and it will continue to do so in the future, there are no indications that it will become less special. British membership in the European Union may limit the publicity given to the special relationship, as demonstrated by Wilson's actions in the late sixties, but there is no indication that the relationship will die in the near future.

There are those who glorify the special relationship and those who despise it; this author believes the special relationship is a good thing for both countries but the relationship is not worthy of either great glory or great debasement. In a shrinking global community, friends that can be relied upon are a necessity; both countries owe something to the other. The historical precedent is but one facet to the special relationship but it provides a rich legacy upon which to base the present special relationship. The middle and late sixties have often been viewed as a time of decline in the relationship over the height and exuberance of the early sixties; however, the relationship is such that no President or Prime Minister alone can destroy its significance or importance. The only way to destroy the special relationship would be the destruction and utter annihilation of one or both countries and their people.

The relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom during the nineteen sixties has been proven to be an interdependent one. Also, the many meetings and consultations and the multitude of correspondence between the Presidents and Prime Ministers undoubtedly

⁵⁹ Danchev. *On Specialness, Essays in Anglo-American Relations*. pp. 165. Translation: "Rest in peace, Anglo-American!"

⁶⁰ Baylis. *Anglo-American Defence Relations 1939-1984, The Special Relationship*. pp. 221.

⁶¹ Baylis. *Anglo-American Defence Relations 1939-1984, The Special Relationship*. pp. 221.

point to a relationship that was special. They relied on each other as friends and as great allies. The relationship is so special because the people of Britain and the people of the United States choose to keep it that way. The relationship has changed over the years, it has acquired new meanings and nuances, but it is still alive and healthy and it will continue to benefit the people of both nations.

⁶² Louis, Roger. and Hedley Bull, eds. *The 'Special Relationship', Anglo-American Relations Since 1945*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

Appendix

United States Presidents and United Kingdom Prime Ministers, 1960-1969⁶³

20 January 53
Dwight Eisenhower
Republican

13 January 57
Harold Macmillan
Conservative

20 January 61
John Kennedy
Democrat

19 October 63
Sir Alec Douglas-Home
Conservative

22 November 63
Lyndon Johnson
Democrat

16 October 64
Harold Wilson
Labor

20 January 69
Richard Nixon
Republican

⁶³ Dickie. 'Special' *No More, Anglo-American Relations: Rhetoric and Reality*. pp. 277, and Alfred F. Havighurst. *Britain in Transition, The Twentieth Century*. 4th Ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985, pp. 653.

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